
News Release

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SCAG Study Encourages LA/SB County Transit Authorities to Further Explore Connectivity to Ontario Airport

A new technical study encourages transportation authorities in San Bernardino and Los Angeles counties to explore a variety of options to improve transit between the two counties and commuter connections into and out of Ontario International Airport (ONT).

The Los Angeles and San Bernardino Inter-County Transit and Rail Connectivity Study was prepared by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) in coordination with LA Metro and the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority (SBCTA). One of the primary purposes of the study was to assess connectivity to ONT, which has experienced healthy growth since its return to local control in November 2016.

Since 2017, Ontario Airport has seen consistent double-digit growth in passenger volumes and with the additions of China Airlines, Frontier Airlines and JetBlue, is on track to handle 5 million passengers this year. Long term, SCAG has projected ONT's demand at 11-19 million passengers per year.

In addition, both LA and San Bernardino counties are among the fastest growing in the United States, representing a significant portion of the 4 million additional residents SCAG projects for its six-county region over the next 25-30 years.

To accommodate that demand and improve access to ONT, several transit alternatives have been floated in recent years, including light rail, hybrid rail, commuter rail and express bus and bus rapid transit service (BRT). The connectivity study did not attempt to choose only one of those options, but concluded that each would help reduce congestion and merit further review by Metro and SBCTA.

"This technical study is a critical step forward. Ontario Airport is in the center of one of the vibrant growth corridors in the U.S. and will continue to expand to meet the region's travel needs. We need to be planning now, and making sure that every alternative is fully vetted," said Alan D. Wapner, Ontario Mayor pro Tem, President of SCAG and President of the Ontario International Airport Authority.

"Our community is extremely supportive of the growth of ONT, but not the congestion and environmental impacts caused by single passenger vehicles. It is imperative that a multi-modal transportation system be an integral element of the airport's future."

The study included input gathered from public open houses, an online survey and meetings with stakeholder groups. It assessed the strengths and weaknesses of each of the alternatives, from potential ridership to commute times to overall cost.

For example, it noted that the least expensive option – expanding bus rapid transit services between the future Montclair Gold Line Station and San Bernardino and several other mobility hubs – would cost less than \$300 million but attract fewer commuters and result in limited travel time savings.

A commuter rail option was divided into two phases. The first would expand Metrolink service between the two counties, with a commuter rail shuttle from the Rancho Cucamonga station to ONT. This would require double tracking in some sections, though the overall capital cost would be less than \$1.5 billion. Phase 2 would extend service even further, such as rerouting Metrolink’s Riverside Line to stop at ONT and connecting the San Bernardino Line directly to the airport with express service. This portion of the plan would result in faster commute times and increase the ridership from Phase 1, but add more than \$3.5 billion to the cost.

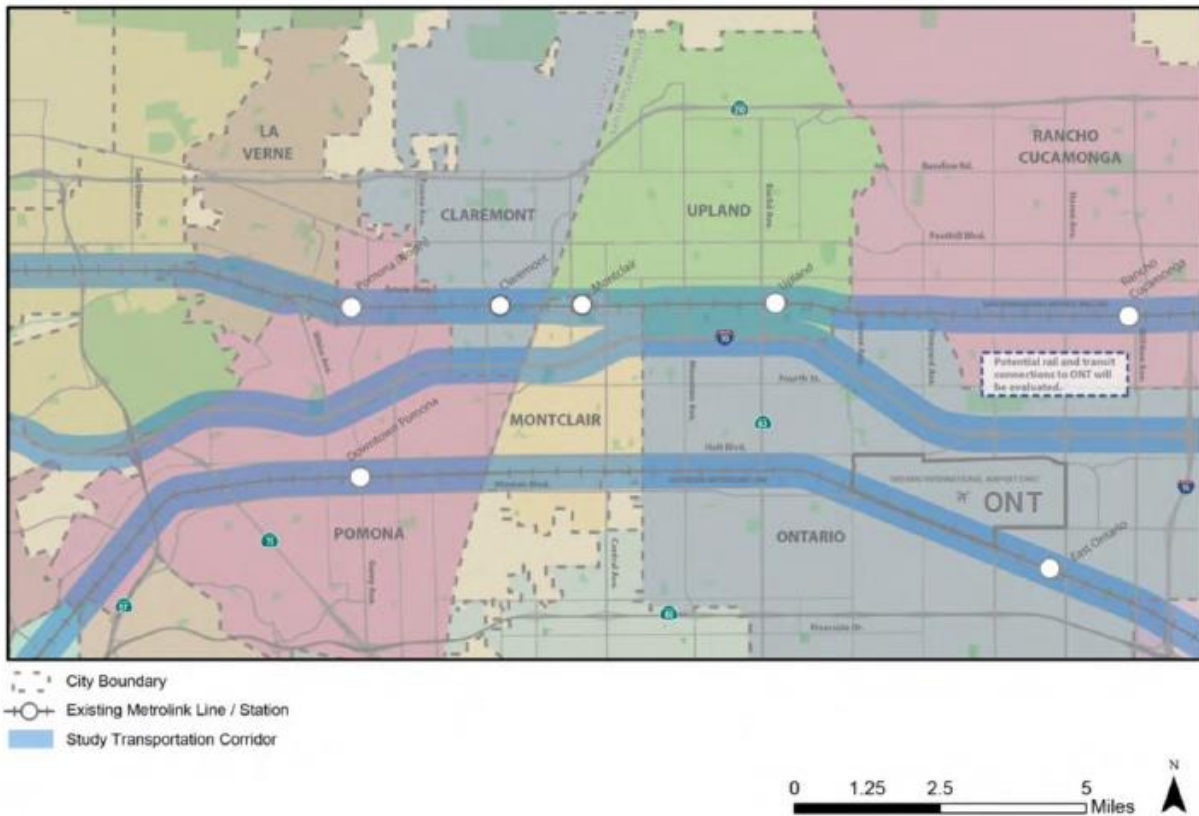
Extending the Gold Line from the future Montclair station was also assessed. One option would extend service using local streets to reach the airport. This option would have high ridership and shorter travel times, but would cost \$2 billion to build, the study said. Option 2 would build the line along Cucamonga Creek, which would have even higher ridership potential but cost more to build (\$2.5 billion).

Another alternative would establish low- or zero-emission hybrid rail service – a light rail-type service without overhead electrical propulsion. This alternative would use existing Metrolink lines – double tracking in some sections – and create a spur that connects the San Bernardino line with the airport. This option would cost less than \$2.5 billion and result in fast commute times between Los Angeles and ONT, but would not see the ridership increase of the other rail alternatives, the study said.

“We’ll be sharing the results of the study next month with the Ontario Airport Roundtable, made up of key stakeholders and business interests from throughout our county. Their input will be critical to determining the best course of action moving forward, as any alignment to the airport would be funded in large part by San Bernardino County taxpayers. We anticipate working closely with LA Metro, to develop a plan for the future that meets our needs as a county and as a region,” said Raymond Wolfe, Executive Director of SBCTA.

“Connecting our two counties and supporting the strong growth that is occurring at Ontario Airport are major priorities for us, and we look forward to developing a plan with our colleagues at SBCTA that benefits everyone,” said Phillip A. Washington, Chief Executive Officer at LA Metro.

Figure: Inter-County Transit and Rail Connectivity Study Area



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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 191 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.